Mysticism in the Upanishads.

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Millions of seekers after Truth, in and out of India have drawn inspiration and guidance from the Upanishads. Through the ages that have passed since they were first given to the world they have neither suffered in their bloom or in fragrance and still maintain a freshness unrivalled in the religious literature and scriptures of the world. Remarkable for their beauty, richness of imagery, depth of meaning, splendour of diction, and the music of words, the Upanishads offer a fair haven to the earnest pilgrim after Reality, Peace and Perfection. Not confined to a mere description of a particular Yogic or Bhakti cult, they are an exhaustive symposium which outlines with characteristic facility and brevity the vagaries and obstacles of the Path that leads to Him and offers a thornless Way back Home, where meets the soul face to face with its Creator.

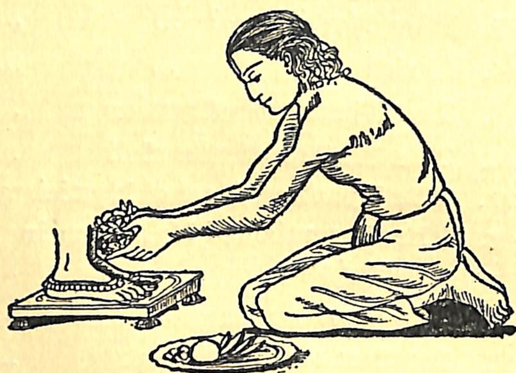
The present volume is the result of a comparative study of the

Upanishads, from the standpoint of mysticism as outlined in the sayings, lives and experiences of the saints of the East and the West. That the language of the heart and the soul is the same everywhere is amply demonstrated in the quotations from the seers of the East and the West which find place in this little volume and amply testify to the unity of the matrix that holds all though apparently divided by time and space and separated by forms which constitute the veil of ignorance that warps our clear vision.

In the preparation of this small offering to my gods I have drawn inspiration from and information about the saints and their sayings from several books, specially those given in the Bibliography at the end of this book and particularly referred to Syt. Narayanswami's translation of Thirty Minor Upanishads which I have very often adopted, and I express my sense of gratitude to the authors and publishers of the same.







The Upanisads.

'Thou art the Hidden One,
hid by Thy Glories.'

—*SYNESIUS.*

"The Upaniṣads were first translated from Sanskrit into Persian by, or it may be for, Dara Shikoh......He seems to have first heard of the Upaniṣads during his stay in Kashmir in 1640...... The translation was finished in 1657...... In 1775 Anquetil Duperron......translated the Persian Manuscript into French (not published) and into Latin. That Latin translation was published in 1801 and 1802." (S. B. E. vol. 1 Intr. p. lix.)

When Schopenhauer read it, he made no secret of his feelings and said:

"In the whole world there is no study, except that of the originals, so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Oupnekat (Upaniṣad). It

has been the solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death !"

The number of the Upaniṣads is very large and scholars differ as to the correct figure to be assigned to them. Prof. Max Muller seems to be inclined to the figure 170. Professor Radhakrishnan, however, leans to the figure 107. Some however have fixed it at 235. The uncertainty in the number is due to the fact that attempts have been made from time to time to exploit the sanctity of the name Upaniṣad, and pass works of inferior authors of a far later period and of inferior merit under that name. It is therefore not surprising to notice such attempts being deplored by scholars. One such is described by Swami Vivekananda in the following terms :

"The Upaniṣads are many, and said to be one hundred and eight, but some declare them to be still large in number. Some of them are evidently of a much later date, as for instance the Allopaniṣad, in which Allā is praised, and

Muhammad is called the Rasula. I have been told that this was written in the reign of Akbar, to bring the Hindus and Muhammadans together, and sometimes they got hold of some word, as Allā or Illā in the Saṃhitās, and made an Upaniṣad on it. So in this Allopaniṣad, Muhammad is the Rasula, whatever that may mean. There are other sectarian Upaniṣads of the same species, which you find to be entirely modern, and it has been so easy to write them, seeing that the language of the Saṃhitā portion of the Vedas is so archaic that there is no grammar to it......''
(Complete Works Mayavati Edn.
vol. 3 pp. 528-529.)

But none shall deny the glory of the Upaniṣads and at any rate the very language of several of them is proof of their genuineness.

The cream of the Upaniṣads is in the *Bhagavad Gītā*. The age of the *Gītā* throws light on the antiquity of the Upaniṣads. The *Gītā* brought the Upaniṣads into greater prominence, by

showing the way to them. William Von Humboldt after reading the *Gītā* said, it is "the most beautiful, perhaps the only true philosophical song existing in any known tongue." Similar sentiments were expressed by the American thinkers Emerson and Thoreau.

The Upaniṣads are rich in mysticism. They are terse in language, and eloquent with sublimity of thoughts. They have now been translated into many languages, and have greatly contributed to the solace of mankind. Their study, therefore, by students of mysticism is likely to be specially beneficial. They have with clarity enunciated the essentials and principles of mysticism as found in the Vedic religion. Their grandeur lies, like the philosophies of Plato and Socrates, in their survival from the philosophical quibbles of succeeding ages, and even to-day they are ranked as the acme of metaphysical and mystical thought.

The Age of Mysticism in India.

"Mysticism has no genealogy. It has no tradition conveyed across frontiers or down the course of generations as a ready-made commodity. It is a state of thinking and feeling to which minds of certain temperament are liable at any time or place, in Occident or Orient, whether Romanist or Protestant, Jew, Turk or Infidel."

—*Vaughan.*

The beginnings of mysticism in India are lost in the mists of antiquity. Buddhist and Jain literatures recognize the existence of an earlier Bhakti School. Sri Aurobindo, remarks Professor Radhakrishnan, "sees the Vedas

replete with mystic poetry". The archeological researches too lead to the conclusion that the "Bhakti Mārga" was recognized at a very early period in India. The conclusion of Vaughan, therefore, that the earliest available mysticism in the world is that of the Hindus is neither a hasty nor an unjustifiable conclusion.

Although relics of this early mysticism and in fact vivid glimpses of it are available in the earlier portions of the Vedas, yet it is only in the Upaniṣads that one reads for the first time the coherent exposition of mystic principles interspersed with apt illustrations. Scholars of repute are prone to synchronize its birth with the advent of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and to see the principles of the Bhakti School for the first time laid down in the *Bhagavad Gītā*. This inference, however, lacks conclusive evidence. *Gītā* is admittedly of a period later than the Upaniṣads. In fact, the Bhakti Mārga

was fully recognized and existed before Śrī Kṛṣṇa, as He Himself sought explanations of the mystic principles from Ṛṣi Ghora Āngirasa (Vide Chhāndogya Upaniṣad, III Prapāṭhaka, 17 Khaṇḍa, verse 6). It is true it received great impetus at the hands of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and grew robust and to a stalwart stature in the sylvan surroundings where Śrī Kṛṣṇa dwelt; but it is the Upaniṣads that first laid down the foundations of mysticism, in a systematic form, enunciating its principles, and illustrating them vividly, pointing the path, describing it in detail and warning strivers against the vagaries of the way.

The age of the Upaniṣads has not yet been definitely fixed. Professor Max Muller has discussed the various current views on the subject. The consensus of opinion of Western scholars leans to the view that they must date somewhere between B. C. 1000 and B. C. 800. The Hindu traditional view, how-

ever, is that being a part of the Vedas they are eternal and there is no reason to be carried away by the tentative theories of Western scholars whose view of Hindu chronology is generally tainted by a narrow outlook which cannot conceive of the existence of any system of thought in this world beyond say a thousand years before the advent of the Christ.

The mysticism of the Upaniṣads has been distinctly recognized as something different from the one portrayed by later Vaiṣṇavism. In "Mysticism in Mahārāṣṭra" the learned authors remark:

> "The Upaniṣadic mysticism was the mysticism of men who lived in cloisters......The mysticism of middle ages was a mysticism which engrossed itself in the practical upliftment of human kind.........brought to the market place."

This view reminds me of the lines of a great writer on Christian mysticism,

who while comparing the Sufi Philosophy with the Emersonian mysticism remarked:

> "The Sufi strive to lose humanity in Deity; Emerson dissolves Deity in humanity...........Self-annihilation is the watchword of the one, Self-assertion of the other."

Comparisons seldom convey correct meanings. I might just in passing mention that even this middle age mysticism in India could not be said in any sense to be lacking in depth and intensity. Kabir and many others dived deep and drank from the source of the fountain, and laid down the union of the individual drop with the Ocean of the Impersonal as the goal of all spiritual quest.

Why Mysticism ?

"The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar,
From the sphere of our sorrow."

—*SHELLEY.*

Life on earth is a pilgrimage in a strange land. It consists of an adventure of the soul in quest of God. Should one sit silently, unmoved, without reflecting on the fact that "he is swept without pause along the great curve of birth and death"; or plunge himself into the abyss of forgetfulness, sitting in bitterness, mocking at blind Fate, which sees Satan work on his job with unconcern; or yet

again, with Plotinus, "weary already with this prison house of a body", "calmly await the day when the divine nature within him shall set him free from matter. ?" As against this impotence, there is the strain of the individualist who in the sinking sun sees the sunrise and laughs and smiles at 'tragic' fate, pausing to say his prayers with Bojer to the mighty spirit in man:

> "So marvellous art thou, O spirit of man! so godlike is thy very nature. Thou dost reap death and in return thou sowest the dream of everlasting life. In revenge for thine evil fate thou dost fill the Universe with an all-loving God.
>
> "We bore our part in His creation, all we who now are dust; we who sank into the dark, like flames gone out we wept, we exulted, we felt the ecstasy and the agony, but each of us brought our ray to the mighty sea of light, each of us from the Negro setting up the first rank above the grave of his dead to the genius raising the pillars of a temple

> towards heaven. We bore our part from the poor mother praying beside a cradle to the hosts that lifted their songs of praise high up into boundless space. Honour to thee, O spirit of man ! Thou givest a soul to the world, thou settest it a goal, thou art the hymn that lifted it into harmony ; therefore turn back into thyself, lift high thy head and meet proudly the evil that comes to thee. Adversity can crush thee, death can blot thee out, yet art thou still unconquerable and eternal.''

This view of life, however, should not be brought down from its ethereal heights to compare with the so-called materialistic view of life which "sees virtue as a delusion and enjoyment as the reality": which considers "Life as the end of life", and hence sees no need to control passion and instincts "since they are nature's legacy to man". This is rather an animal, if I may be permitted to use the expression, view of life. There is no harm in recognizing your individuality, and worshipping

it. But that must be the outcome of a genuine feeling. Edward Carpenter is perhaps sounding the right note when he warns such thinkers to bestow greater thought:

"Each little leaf on a tree may very naturally have sufficient consciousness, that it is an entirely separate being, maintaing itself in the sunlight and the air, withering away and dying when the winter comes on, and there is an end of it.......It may refuse to realize that all the time it is being supported by the sap which flows from the trunk of the tree, and that in its turn it is feeding the tree too—that its self is the self of the whole tree."

The mere fact that I cannot know the self is not sufficient for me to deny it or see a blind fate ruling the Universe. I must try to convince myself by experience that my conclusion is correct. This necessitates the quest. I shall not be far wrong when I say there seems to be an essential human need or longing to know the nature of soul or God. A divine

discontent seems to be implanted in us at our birth, which shall not leave us, until we have solved for ourselves the riddle of existence. Man cannot but philosophize, and this philosophizing has "rest" for its objective. The mystic craves for "rest". This one word summarizes all his longing. "The billows of change" as Marcus Aurelius said "and variation roll apace, and he who ponders them will feel contempt for all things mortal". It is eternity and not mortality that will usher us into the region of peace. This leads us to the study of the lives and experiences of the great saints, for it is they who have made religion. What we call as religion is nothing else but a record of their thoughts. They instruct and comfort and sometimes lead us in the Path. Hence the importance of religious biographies in the study of religion, and in mysticism in particular. They are those who have sailed through the seas of life unperturbed facing so many vicissitudes,

doubts, and whirlpools of agony and sorrow, but by sheer faith piloted their barque to the fair haven. They have seen the dazzling heights, and also dived into the lowest depths. They have found their vessels "swept into the frozen North, where the vice of a great despair has closed about them like the ribs of death, and through a long soul's winter they have lain hidden in cold and darkness, as some belated swallow in the cleft of a rock. It has been theirs too to encounter the perilous fervours of that zone where never cooling cloud appears to veil insufferable radiance". But the passage whether through the Dark Night of the Soul, or under the noon-day radiance of the Divine effulgence has never perturbed the tranquillity of their soul. They have seldom been eloquent, except when they have found it worth helping a despairing devotee, or where unable to bear the burning pain of separation, they have cried out, "how long more like this?" These

people are the mystics. Their message is mysticism. And the "kernel of mysticism is at bottom one, though Indian mystics may ring", says Ranade, "the changes upon one chord, the Christian mystics on a second, and the Islamic yet on a third. All these mystics constitute a musical band of God, and each constitutes his note in such a way that the whole becomes a harmony and a symphony wonderful."

In this age of religious wrangles the value of mysticism cannot be deprecated. It presents a common ground to the followers of the various sects. Says Miss Underhill "We cannot honestly say that there is any wide difference between Brahmana, Sufi or Christian mystic. At their best they are far more like each other than they are like the average believer in their sacred creeds". (The Essentials of Mysticism p. 4). This catholic attitude of the mystic is the corner-stone of his faith. He seeks to win his Lord through Love. Neither his

Lord nor the instrument—love—employed by him is the monopoly of any creed. He desires to feel the touch of the deity, "the touch that is like the passionate lover's resting on the heaving bosom of his beloved". Ask him to describe it. Ask him what this touch is like. Ask him what His form is like. With Buddha, he becomes silent, with the Vedantist he cries Neti, Neti (not this: not this) and with Ruysbroek he chants "He is neither this nor that". Mistake not however this expression of his as a cry of desperation. The mystic is no day-dreamer who will accept the things for their face value. He is a critic who will reject obstacles and theories if they do not satisfy him. His knowledge is based on first-hand experience, intellectual and logical cobwebs cannot warp his vision nor dwarf his insight into things. His aim is one, the union of his soul with God. And this he considers the highest achievement of human consciousness.

It is this Union that the Upaniṣads proclaim as the life's objective. Young and old, rich and poor are all urged to it. They are driven by necessity, because wealth, power, family, none can give them solace. When the question regarding the self is put by them and the Teacher tries to test their keenness to get a reply by offering them all riches and satisfaction of boons, they refuse the offer, and would not abandon their quest. Their replies are characteristic. When King Bṛhadratha was dissuaded by saint Śākyāyana from putting the question regarding the self he replied:

> "O saint, what is the use of the enjoyment of pleasures in this offensive, pithless body—a mere mass of bones, skin, sinews, marrow, flesh, seed, blood, mucus, tears, phlegm, ordure, water, bile and slime! What is the use of enjoyment of pleasures in this body, which is assailed by lust, hatred, greed, delusion, fear, anguish, jealousy, separation from what is loved,

union with what is not loved, hunger, thirst, old age, death, illness, grief and other evils. And we see all this is perishable, as these flies, gnats and other insects, as herbs and trees growing and decaying. And what of these ? There are other great ones, mighty wielders of bows...rulers of empires... and kings......who before the eyes of their whole family surrendered the greatest happiness and passed on from this world to that. And what of these ? There are other great ones. We see the destruction of Gandharvas......and what of these ? There is the drying up of great oceans, the falling of mountains, the moving of the pole-star, the cutting of the windropes (that hold the stars), the submergence of the earth, and the departure of the gods from their place. In *such a world* as this what is the use of the enjoyment of pleasures, if he who is fed on them is seen to return (to this world) again and again !

(Maitrāyaṇa-Brāhmaṇa Up.
Prapāṭh. 1, verse 3-4. S. B. E.)

In the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad the same question is put in a different form; "When are we born ? Whereby do we live and whither do we go ?" And the reply to the question is the description of the self that follows in the Upaniṣads. And it is with the self that the Upaniṣads are primarily concerned. Once granted that the quest in life is to seek the meaning of it, therein lies peace and rest for the soul.

Bhakti.

"O burn that burns to heal !
O more thou pleasant wound !"

—*St. John of Cross.*

Lovers of the Lord all the world over have one creed and one language to express their feelings and recite their experiences. It is no surprise therefore that separated by time and space they have sung similar songs that lend support to the theory and lead to the conclusion that just as the goal of the devotee in all religions and at all times has been the same, namely, union with the Lord, so also the path must be the same, and that none else but the path of devotion or

Bhakti. Wordy quibbles apart, if principles are sought for in the various religions and creeds, one cannot but arrive at the truth that they are the same. It is therefore a mistake to seek for the reconciliation of all the religions. Such an attempt is based on an assumption that there are differences in the fundamental principles of religion, which I submit do not exist. Ceremonials and forms ignored, the essentials are the same. All religions agree, for example, that the soul is of the likeness of God and in fact God itself. You call it by whatever name—Sat-Chit-Ānanda or omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent God. And the quest in life is to realize it. It is true that ceremonials and rituals are a natural growth in the life of a religion and the toys and dolls of its infancy, but as we proceed further, they cease to attract our attention. Our dissensions arise when we forget the reality and confuse it with the formal and take that as the essential.

What difference, should it make to a reasonable man, if the devotee in one creed seeks Him in the temple and the other in the mosque ? What harm does it make, if one tries to please Him sounding the conch and the bells in the temple and the other tries to woo Him by burning incense? Our quarrels resemble our insistence on the Eskimo putting on the linen like us and not the seal's skin. How absurd! Forms once abandoned, dissensions will cease.

In every religion we find a definite vein of development. This progress and development, however, has always been in a circle. We notice the sunrise, the progress and the glorious sunset in everyone of these different religions. Difficulties arise when we ignore these various stages. Take for instance the Vedic religion, now known as the Hindu religion. It has for its authority the Vedas. To fix the age of the Vedas is fraught with great

difficulty, and the testimonies on the point are so conflicting that one cannot but notice wide differences in the date ascribed to them. One thing can however be safely asserted about them, viz., that they are records of a period extending over several centuries of religious development of a people. The Vedas can be divided very aptly into two distinct parts, the Karma and the Jñāna Kāṇḍas, that is the ceremonial or ritualistic and the philosophic or metaphysical portions. The Upaniṣads constitute the last (āraṇyaka) portion of the Vedas. When people dissatisfied with mere sense-satisfaction, sought an escape from death and attempted to find the eternal in man, the reply came in the shape of the Upaniṣads. It gave fuel to the spark that was gently kindling within inquisitive man, and tried to mount the flames of devotion. Upaniṣads were the inevitable consequence of spiritual growth, coming at the right time in the cycle of spiritual upliftment. The cycle of

progress seems to have been completed with the Upaniṣads. And after they were once given out in full, the downward march in the cycle of spirituality began. There are distinct stages in this downward march, the lowest point of which will be marked by the worship of Mammon as representing the height of spiritual effort. Once this lowest point is reached the upward march along the curve of the circle will begin. Already there are indications in the West that people have begun to realize that they have reached the lowest point of the circle. In India we do not distinctly see the lowest point because we have a rich spiritual tradition to look up to. But if we bear the fact in mind that what we call progress or growth is nothing but a stage in the circular movement we shall find that there is nothing untoward in it.

However if we remember that our progress is in the circle, only modified

now and then by the reminders due to these past traditions, we shall soon find that there is nothing untoward round about us, everything is in its right place, the scheme of creation will vividly, appear to be faultless. With Professor Radhakrishnan, we would be right in saying:

> "It is the Law which pervades the whole world, which all gods and men must obey. If there is any law in the world it must work itself out. If by any chance its effects are not revealed here on earth, they must be brought to fruition elsewhere. Where law is, disorder and injustice are only provincial and partial. The triumph of the wicked is not absolute. The shipwreck of the good need not cause despair."
>
> (Indian Philosophy, Vol., II. p. 109.)

For society, as for the individual, the path is chalked out, of course overlapping now and then. The Law of Karma will account for such over-

lapping. Every individual comes endowed in this world with certain knowledge; and what he is, is what he has acquired in the past lives. But man knows no retarding in the progress. Evolution and progress is inevitable. He is bound to grow. The Law of Karma is very jealous, and man has to bear the consequences of his immediate acts. This leads to overlapping and we cannot find in this world a distinct upward line of evolution; deviation at particular stages becomes inevitable, and this in common phraseology we call as pleasure and pain. Again we speak of these terms only in a comparative sense, for what may be a rich and a comfortable state of finances for a poor cultivator may be the cause of misery and the greatest anxiety to a king. We have therefore to keep the Law of Karma in view. With it before us, we shall not lose sight of our individual stage of development and shall not be courting misery by trying to jump and at one stage reach the final goal and the ultimate

reality. We should not ignore our equipment, with which we have come endowed, and keep the great factor, the element of time before us. We have to pass the intermediary stages that lead us to the goal. Our impatience must learn to obey the bridle. As at present placed, our *bona fides* may be unassailable, but our impatience is questionable and is the outcome of ignorance and leads to pain.

The Theory of Creation.

"There is hardly any suggestion in the Upaniṣads" says Professor Radhakrishnan (Indian Philosophy, Vol. II) "that the entire Universe of change is a baseless fabric of fancy, a mere phenomenal show or a world of shadows. The artistic and the poetic souls of the Upaniṣads lived always in the world of nature and never cared to fly out of it. The Upaniṣads do not teach that life is a nightmare and the world a barren nothing. Rather it is pulsing and throbbing with the rhythm of world harmony. The world is God's revelation of Himself. His joy assumes all the forms." It is unwise to imagine that Māyā means illusion in the entirety. At best it is a dream, but dream too has

some reality. It would be more correct to say that the world is a self-limitation of the Creator. If it were not so, how can this entity, if illusory, dream to meet the Reality? The world has metaphorically been described in the Upaniṣads and illustrated, as ornaments, the gold being the reality; as the thread which the spider gives out to make a net; as the wood that contains the sparks; as the flute that contains the reality, the music within itself. Although later interpreters have given different interpretations to the texts, and the Dualist and the Monist systems have resulted; distinctions have been drawn between the Puruṣa and the Prakṛti, but it would be best to draw one's own conclusions from the texts. Thus does the Maitrāyaṇī Upaniṣad (Prap. II, 6) say regarding creation:

"In the beginning Prajāpati (the Lord of creatures) stood alone. Meditating on Himself He created many creatures. He looked on them and

saw they were like stone without understanding and standing like a lifeless post. He had no happiness. He thought, 'I shall enter within, that they may awake'. Making Himself like air (vāyu) He entered them. Being one He could not do it. Then dividing Himself fivefold, He is called Prāṇa, Apāna, Samāna, Udāna, Vyāna................"

To the same effect is the Taittirīya Upaniṣad (Valli. II, Anuvāka 6):

> "He wished I may be many, may I grow forth. He brooded over Himself (like a man performing penance). After He had thus brooded, He set forth (created) all, whatever there is. Having set forth He entered it, He became *sat* (what is manifest), and *tyat* (what is not manifest) defined and undefined, supported and not supported, endowed with knowledge and without knowledge (as stones) real and unreal. The *satya* (true) becomes all this whatsoever, and therefore the wise call it (the Brahma) Satya (true)".

Allegorical descriptions as stated above are not wanting. He is described in

the Upaniṣads as follows: "As the spider sends forth and draws in its thread, as plants grow on earth, as from every man hairs spring forth on the head and the body, thus does everything arise here from the Indestructible." But it is the "Lila Theory" that is emphasized times and often by the Upaniṣads. The Praśna Upaniṣad (Ques. 1, 4) while stating it leans towards the dualistic theory:

> "Prajāpati (the Lord of the creatures) was desirous of creatures (prajāḥ). He performed penance, he produced a pair, matter (rayi) and spirit (prāṇa) thinking that they together should produce creatures from Him in many ways."

I have purposely mentioned this view also, for apparently it appears the functions by the creator had been delegated to the first two created, viz., Prakṛti and Puruṣa. In fact it is a difference only in language. The main theory remains the same. The creation

is the outcome of the desire on the part of the Creator to manifest Himself.

Such is the view upheld practically by all other religions. It has been inferred therefore that life must be all joy and at all events should be all ecstasy. The popular concept that Buddhism looks askance at it does not seem to be correct. In fact, Buddha Himself "saw a great design behind Creation."

The Nature of the Self.

The quest of Vedānta is directed towards knowing the nature of the self. Each Upaniṣad practically starts with the same question. And unable to define the indefinable in terms of time, space and causation, the Upaniṣads have contented themselves by answering it with a NETI, NETI (Not this, Not this), and where a positive definition is attempted, in effect a negative and a symbolic way of expression has been adopted. In the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad, adhyāya 3, verses 19–20, the self is defined as:

> "Grasping without hands, hasting without feet, he sees without eyes, he hears without ears, he knows

what can be known, but no one knows him, they call him the first, the great Person (Puruṣa).

"The self smaller than small, greater than great, is hidden in the heart of the creature. A man who has left all grief behind, sees the Majesty, the Lord, the passionless by the grace of the Creator."

A more vivid description is in the Kaṭha Upaniṣad, Valli 2, verses 18—22:

"The knowing (self) is not born, it dies not, it sprang from nothing, nothing sprang from it. The ancient is unborn, eternal, everlasting, he is not killed though the body is killed.

"If the killer thinks that he kills, if the killed thinks that he is killed, they do not understand, for this one does not kill, nor is that one killed.

"Though sitting still he walks far, though lying down he goes everywhere; who save myself is able to know that God Who rejoices and rejoices not!

"The wise who knows the self as bodiless within the bodies, as unchanging among changing things, as

great and omnipresent does never grieve."

From its very nature, the self cannot be contaminated. The ailments of the body leave him untouched.

> "As the sun, the eye of the whole world is not contaminated by the external impurities seen by the eyes, thus the one self within all things becomes different according to whatever it enters and exists also without." (Kaṭha, valli 5, verse 11.)

A warning note is however struck here, that through variety one should not infer difference in the nature of the Self:

> "As the one fire after it has entered the world, though one, becomes different according to whatever it burns, thus the one self within all things becomes different according to whatever it enters and exists also without.
>
> "As the one air after it has entered the world, though one, becomes different according to whatever it

enters thus the one self within all things becomes different according to whatever it enters and exists also without." (Kaṭha, Valli 5, 9-10.)

To bring the point home the same thing has been allegorically described in the Kaṭha Upaniṣad (Valli 3, verses 3 onwards.):

"Know the self to be sitting in the chariot, the body to be the chariot, the intellect (buddhi) the charioteer, and the mind the reins. The senses they call the horses, the objects of the senses the roads. When he the highest self is in union with the body, the senses and the mind, then wise people call him the enjoyer."

The Paingala Upaniṣad assumes the same similie:

"Know the Ātmā to be the rider and the body as the chariot, know also buddhi as the charioteer and the manas as the reins. The wise say the organs are the horses, the objects are the roads (through which the horses travel) and the hearts are the moving balloons."

Sometimes the self is compared to a prisoner in the prison-house called the body, and at other times as an encaged bird :

> "The embodied spirit within the body with nine gates, the bird flutters outwards, the ruler of the whole world, of all that rests and all that moves." (Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad Adh. 3, 18.)"

Such then is the self "that which cannot be seen, nor seized, which has no family and no caste, no eyes and no ears, no hands, nor feet, the eternal, the omnipresent (all-pervading) infinitesimal, that which is imperishable, that it is which the wise regard as the source of all beings." (Mun. Up. Mun. 1 Kh. 1, 6.)

As to the relationship of the self to the human soul no more graphic description is possible than we find in the Śvet. Up. adh. 4, 6:

> "Two birds inseparable friends cling to the same tree. One of them eats the sweet, the other looks on without eating.

"On the same tree man sits, grieving, immersed, bewildered by his impotence (an-īśa). But when he sees the other Lord (Īśa) contented, and knows his glory, then the grief passes away."

The passage has at length been explained by Swami Vivekananda:

"Again where can you find a more perfect expression of the whole philosophy of the world, the gist of what the Hindus ever thought, the whole dream of human salvation, painted in language more wonderful, in figure more marvellous than the lines quoted above?..............This is the picture of the human soul. Man is eating the sweet and bitter fruits of this life pursuing gold, pursuing his senses, pursuing the vanities of life, hopelessly, madly careering he goes............Such is the career of man pursuing the vanities of life, children dreaming golden dreams only to find that they are but vain, and old men chewing the cud of their past deeds, and yet not knowing how to get out of this network. Yet in the life of every one there

come gold moments; in the midst of the deepest sorrows, nay of the deepest joys there come moments when part of the cloud that hides the sunlight moved away as it were and we catch a glimpse, in spite of ourselves, of something beyond,— away, away beyond the life of the senses; away, away beyond its vanities, its joys and its sorrows; away away beyond nature, or our imaginations of happiness here or hereafter; away beyond all thirst for gold or for fame, or for name or for posterity. Man stops for a moment, at this glimpse, and sees the other bird calm and majestic, eating neither sweet nor bitter fruits, but immersed in his own glory, self-content, self-satisfied......Man catches a glimpse, then again he forgets and goes on eating the sweet and bitter fruits of life; perhaps after a time he catches another glimpse, and the lower bird goes nearer and nearer to the higher bird as blows after blows are received; if he be fortunate enough to receive hard knocks, then he comes nearer and nearer to his companion, the other bird, his life, his friend, and as he

approaches him he finds that the light from the higher bird is playing round its own plumage, and as he goes nearer and nearer, lo ! the transformation is going on. The nearer and nearer he comes, he finds himself melting away, as it were until he has entirely disappeared. He did not really exist; it was but the reflection of the other bird, who was there calm and majestic amidst the moving leaves. It was all glory, that upper bird's. He then becomes fearless, perfectly satisfied, calmly serene. In this figure the Upaniṣads take you from the dualistic to the utmost Adwaitic conception."

(Mayavati Memorial Edn. of Vivekananda's works, vol. III., p. 235-236).

The Upanisad Ideal of Mysticism.

"Self-love lies at the foundation of all kinds of love."

—*Yājñavalkya.*

The Upaniṣads lay down the ideal of an Impersonal God. Even behind the seeming forms they seek it. They do not deny the personal or the manifest. They do not decry idol-worship. However they seek the Self, and behind forms they see Him. In the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (2 Adh. 4. Brah. 5.) Yājñavalkya says:

"Verily, a husband is not dear, that you may love the husband, but that you may love the self, therefore the husband is dear.

"Verily, a wife is not dear, that you may love the wife, but that you may love the self, therefore wife is dear.

"Verily, the sons are not dear, that you may love the sons, but that you may love the self, therefore the sons are dear.

"Verily, wealth is not dear, that you may love wealth, but that you may love the self, therefore wealth is dear.

"Verily, worlds are not dear, that you may love the worlds but that you may love the self, therefore the worlds are dear.

"Verily, creatures are not dear, that you may love the creatures, but that you may love the self, therefore are the creatures dear.

"Verily, everything is not dear, that you may love everything, but that you may love the self, therefore everything is dear........."

The Vedantist desires a complete annihilation and merging into the great universal self. He would not like to remain conscious of his personality. His desire to lose his personality, he will illustrate thus:

> "As the flowing rivers that go towards the ocean, when they have reached the ocean sink into it, their name and form are broken, and people speak of the ocean only, exactly thus the sixteen parts of the spectator that go towards the person (puruṣa) sink into him, their name and form are broken and people speak of the person only and he becomes without parts and immortal." (Praśna Upaniṣad Sixth Question)

Or again we have a similar illustration in the Chhāndogya Upaniṣad 6 Prapāṭhaka 9 Khaṇḍa 1:

> "As the bees, my son, make honey by collecting the juices of different trees, and reduce the juice into a form and as the juices have no discrimination, so that they might say, I am the juice of this tree or

> that, in the same manner, my son, all these creatures when they have become merged in the true (either in deep sleep or in death) know not that they are merged in the True."

The condition of the devotee in that final state of union may be compared to that of salt in water:

> "Place the salt in water and then wait"······In the morning when the son was called to bring the salt, it was nowhere to be found and yet the water all through tasted saltish. So said the father, 'O son, here also in the body for sooth you do not perceive the Truth (sat) but there indeed it is."

The same point has by a different illustration been elucidated in the VI Prapāṭhaka 12 Khaṇḍa of the Chhāndogya Upaniṣad, where the 'subtile essence' of the self has been demonstrated:

> "Fetch me from thence a fruit of the Nyagrodha tree.
> Here it is, sir.
> Break it.

It is broken, Sir.
What do you see there ?
Not anything Sir."

"The father said: my son that subtile essence which you do not perceive there, of that very essence this great Nyagrodha tree exists.

'Believe it, my son: that which is the subtile essence, in it all that exists has its self. It is the true. It is the self and thou, O Śvetaketu, art it."

Clearly do the Upaniṣads point out that the instruments viz., the senses are not to be confounded with the Impersonal Self, the object of all quest. In the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad Adhyāya 1; Brāhmaṇa 4, verse 7. it is thus stated:

"......He cannot be seen, for in part only, when breathing he is breath by name; when speaking speech by name; when seeing eye by name; when hearing ear by name. All terms are but the names of his acts. And he who worships (regards) him as the one or the other, does

> not know him, for he is apart from this (when qualified) by the one or the other (predicate). Let men worship him as self, for in the self all these are one, this self is the footstep of everything, for through it one knows everything. And as one can find again by footsteps what one has lost, thus he who knows this finds glory and praise."

The quest being after the Impersonal, that has neither sex nor caste, nor belongs to any creed, is of necessity untramelled by forms, and not likely to be pleased or displeased with forms and ceremonies. Because Vedānta insists on this probing behind the forms, a necessity has arisen to give esoteric explanations to the various ceremonies that existed in the time of the Upaniṣads, and which though necessary for an ethical and a moral life, were rather unimportant for the spiritual life, which is the goal. The conservative nature of the people would not permit them to abandon these rituals, which were ancient, although unnecessary for the

time of the Upaniṣads, and therefore led the expounders of the Upaniṣads to maintain them and yet to deviate from them without injuring the susceptibilities of the people, by giving them symbolic meanings, and asking people to concentrate their attention on the real meaning and not to be carried away by literary verbiage. We therefore notice the TRIDAṆḌĪ (*i. e.* an ascetic having a three-knotted staff) stated to connote a person who holds the three DAṆḌAS (control) of mind, speech and body firmly. (Nāradaparivrājaka Upaniṣad.)

Similarly we notice in the Brahma Upaniṣad the *Yajñopavīta* being defined in a similar way:

> "The wise man having shaved his head completely should throw away the external thread. He should wear as the thread, the supreme and indestructible Brahma. Sūtra means the Supreme abode.........On the *sūtra* (thread) everything is strung, like the beads on the thread. The Yogī

well-versed in yoga and having a clear perception of Truth, should wear the thread. Practising the noble Yoga, the wise man should abandon the external thread........... Those whose *sūtra* is within, whose *yajñopavīta* is *jñāna*—they only know the *sūtra*, and they only wear the *yajñopavīta* in this world...........The *yajñopavīta* (Yajña means Viṣṇu or sacrifice and Upavīta is that which surrounds, and hence that which surrounds Viṣṇu) is supreme and the supreme refuge.''

Similar to the meaning given to the sacred thread is the explanation that attaches to the term CASTE. Caste has played a vital part in the religious history of India. You have not swerved from the Truth.

In the Nirālamba Upaniṣad, the question of *Jāti* (caste) has been thus defined:

"It cannot refer to the skin, the blood, the flesh or the bone. There is no caste for the Ātmā. Caste is only conventional.''

The Vajrasūchica Upaniṣad has explained the point logically and at length:

"What is meant by the Brāhmaṇa? Is it Jīva? Is it body? Is it class? Is it jñāna? Is it Karma? Or is it a doer of Dharma?...........To begin with: Is the Jīva the Brāhmaṇa? No. Since the Jīva is the same in many past and future bodies (of all persons) and since the Jīva is the same in all of the many bodies obtained by the force of Karma, therefore Jīva is not the Brāhmaṇa. Then is the body the Brāhmaṇa? No. Since the body as it is made up of the five elements, is the same for all people down to the chāṇḍālas, etc., since old age and death, dharma and adharma are found to be common to them all, and there is no absolute distinction that the Brāhmaṇas are white-coloured, the Kṣatriyas red, the Vaiśyas yellow, and Śūdras dark, and since by burning the corpse of his father etc., the stain of the murder of a Brāhmaṇa etc., will accrue to the son etc., therefore the body is not the Brāhmaṇa.

"Then is a class Brāhmaṇa ? No. Since many great Ṛṣis have sprung from other castes and orders of creation, Ṛṣyaśṛnga was born of deer, Kauśika of Kuśa grass, Jāmbuka of jackal, Vālmīki of Valmīka (ant-hill), Vyāsa of a fisherman's daughter, Gautama of the posteriors of a hare, Vaśiṣṭha of Urvaśī, Agastya of a water-pot, thus have we heard. Of these many Ṛṣis outside the caste even have stood first among the teachers of divine wisdom, therefore a class is not the Brāhmaṇa.

"Then is jñāna the Brāhmaṇa ? No. Since there were many Kṣatriyas and others well-versed in the cognition of divine Truth, therefore jñāna is not Brāhmaṇa. Then is Karma the Brāhmaṇa ? No. Since the Prārabdha, Sañchita and Āgāmī karmas are the same for all beings, and since all people perform their actions as impelled by Karma, therefore Karma is not the Brāhmaṇa. Who indeed then is the Brāhmaṇa ? Whoever he may be, he who has directly realized his Ātmā and who is directly cognisant, like the myrobalan in his palm, of his Ātmā that is without a second, that is

devoid of class or actions, that is free from the six stains and six changes, that is of the nature of Truth, Knowledge, Bliss and Eternity, that is without any change in itself, that is the substratum of all kalpas, that exists penetrating all things, that pervades everything within and without as ākāśa, that is of the nature of undivided bliss, that cannot be reasoned about and that is known only by direct cognition. He who by reason of having obtained his wishes is devoid of his faults of thirst after worldly objects and passions, who is the possessor of the qualifications beginning with Śama, who is free from emotions, malice, thirst after worldly objects, desire, delusion, etc., whose mind is untouched by pride, egoism etc., who possesses all these qualities and means—he only is a Brāhmaṇa."

Apparently it might appear as a tedious and a strained interpretation, but I think the correctness of it cannot be denied or doubted. We are bound to criticise it as a mystic rather than a real explanation. But such explanations

in their own way seem to satisfy the soul and we feel like accepting them as correct. What may appear at the outset to be a kind of explanation peculiar to the Vedic thinkers and the Vedantists is not really so. Such explanations about similar matters are no special right or privilege of the givers of the Upaniṣads. We find esoteric explanations given to the various verses of the Quran by the Sufis, and to the words of Christ by the Romanist mystics.

Really what appears as an esoteric explanation is the *prima facie* description of the truth. Why it appears as stretched, is because we attempt by pen and brush to portray that which is beyond the ken of thought, above time and causation. Did not Plato feel his helplessness when he said:

> "There is no writing of mine on this (mysticism) subject, nor ever shall be. It is not capable of expression like other branches of study.........If I thought these things could be

adequately written down and stated to the world, what finer occupation could I have had in life than to write what would be of great service to mankind."

And we find the echo of these words in a well-known Christian mystic, where Marina De Escobar feels her helplessness and says:

"No language can describe the secret marvels that are there wrought between God and the soul or the grandeur of God which is there (in union) manifested."

Perhaps Dionysius expressed his feelings more tersely on the subject when he said:

"If any one saw God and understood what he saw, then it was not God that he saw but something that belongs to Him."

There is then enough of apology for the so-called esoteric explanations attempted by the mystics.

The Essentials of Mysticism in Vedanta.

"There is one virtue, to forget oneself as a person, one vice, to remember oneself."

—*Fichte.*

The chief characteristics of Hindu mysticism have been summed up by Vaughan in his 'Hours with the Mystics' (vol. II., p. 55) in the following words:

"1. It lays claim to disinterested love, as opposed to a mercenary religion.

2. It reacts against the ceremonial prescription and pedantic literalism of the Vedas.

3. It identifies, in its pantheism, subject and object, worshipper and worshipped.

4. It aims at ultimate absorption in the Infinite.

5. It inculcates as the way to this dissolution absolute passivity, withdrawal into the inmost self, cessation

of all power, giving recipes for procuring the beatific torpor or trance.

6. It believes that eternity may thus be realized in time.
7. It has its mythical, miraculous pretensions, *i. e.*, its theorogic department, and
8. Finally, it advises the learner in this kind of religion to submit himself implicitly to a spiritual guide—his Guru.''

One may not entirely agree with Mr. Vaughan in his analysis, and style his summary as incomplete. But it cannot be altogether denied that it faithfully brings out many of the principal points of Hindu mysticism. Add to what he says, the theory of Karma, supremacy of intuition over intellect and some other essential features of Hindu mysticism and you will have before you a tolerably correct picture of it.

The Upaniṣads have stated mysticism as the search after God, a quest to discover the self, and ultimately to lose it in the Universal Self.

The Guru.

> "The truly illuminated man flows out in universal charity towards heaven and upon earth...is the intermediary between God and creation."
>
> —*Ruysbroek.*

"Man ! thou art thine own friend, why wishest thou for a friend beyond thyself." is the spirit of the most ancient religion in India. A very pertinent question then arises which has yet remained unsolved, when did the Guru come to have an accredited position. Later history shows that protests had already been launched against his growing position. Even a Master like Buddha

raised his voice of protest against the surrender of the disciple to his Teacher. To Anand he said:

> "Be ye lamp unto yourselves: betake yourself to no external refuge: hold fast to the truth as a lamp: hold fast as a refuge to Truth: look not for refuge to anyone beside yourselves."

And this institution has its parallels in the other countries in the Pir of the Sufis, the confessor of the Middle Ages, the Directeur of Modern France, and the experienced friend of God to the mystic of "Cologne and Strasburg, and Nicholas of Basle to Dr. Tauler."

In India even in a later period we find the danger was already very prominent, and the great saints of the Bhakti movement seldom gained their point when they raised their voice of protest against it. One such attempt is apparent from the saying of Kabir, where he attempts to identify the Self within with the Teacher:

> "Kabir ! When we sang His praises,
> we could not know the Teacher.
> Now that I found the Teacher in
> the heart, to no purpose is all
> song."

We are familiar with what followed and preceded Kabir. Kabir himself recognized a teacher in flesh and blood, and his followers started the creed of Kabir Panthīs. Other Panthīs—the Dādū Panthīs, the Rāmānandīs, all recognize the Teacher in flesh and blood, and do not evince the suggested compromise of Teacher within. So great was the power and respect shown to the Teachers by the disciples in the days of the Bhakti Movement in the 14th and the 15th centuries, that God was compared as nothing to the Teacher: Sahjo Bai says:

> "Sahjo ! the works of the world are
> incomplete without the Teacher.
> The Lord shall never be known
> never met without first finding the
> Teacher.
> Greater than the Lord is the Teacher,
> so say the Vedas and the Purāṇas,

Sahjo ! in the house of the Lord
lies salvation, in the house of the
Teacher God Himself.''

This unique position is even to this day enjoyed by the Teachers of the Radhaswamis. He is considered to be the embodiment of God on earth.

The very same respect we notice in the case of the Rāmānandīs, as I said above. Samartha Rāmadāsa himself in one of his Abhangas says:

> "He who regards God as superior to the Guru, is a fool............The Guru is immortal. Godhood is evanescent. Before the greatness of the Guru the greatness of ~~the~~ God is as nothing. He must be a bad disciple who regards his Guru and God as of equal count......The power of God is the power of illusion, the power of the Guru carries everything before it."

We have again in Europe similar adulation paid to the Teacher. Fenlon strongly advocated obedience to the mandates of the director and "abject

servility to Him." Theresa says, Vaughan tells us: "whenever our Lord commanded her in prayer to do anything, and her confessor ordered the opposite, the divine Guide enjoined obedience to the human......" The Persian mystic likewise have not lagged behind in attributing to the Teacher all greatness. He is asked to be implicitly followed by the devotee, even to the breaking of the commandments of the Holy Book—Quran. Here is Hafiz who has prominently brought out the mystics point of view:

"Dye thy prayer-mat with wine if
the Teacher so orders,
For know it he is not acquainted
with the mysteries of the Path and
the formalities thereof."

And yet we have in Rumi again an attempt made similar to Kabir to warn against implicit obedience to the Teacher:

"He needs a guide no longer who
hath found
The way already leading to the
Friend,

Who stands already on heaven's
topmost dome,
Needs not to search for ladders ; he
that lies
Folded in favour on Sultan's breast,
Needs not the latter or the messen-
ger."

(*Nicholson's Translation.*)

Madame Guyon who was a great believer in the creed of blind adulation to the Teacher once got the rebuff from a seeker:

"Madame, you are disappointed and perplexed, because you seek without what you have within. Accustom yourself to seek God in your heart and you will find Him."

The object of these remarks is not the decrying of the place of the teacher for as Guyon had one as a Teacher so had Rumi one in Shamsh Tabriz. All they say is "Caution" in the choice of the Teacher. To-day the Teacher is applauded. Rama Tirth and Vivekananda had their Teachers, of whom they always spoke as Bhagavān (God). And yet they

say beware of the false ones. They have, some of them heroic words to say. The more heroic they are and the greater the opposition, the greater are the chances for them to secure martyrdom. The crucifixion of the leader of the Babi movement and so many others are recent events. The real teacher is a rarity, but he is not extinct. When the disciple yearns for one he does come. Such a Teacher has the indicia that can make him recognizable. The main test of the Teacher in the realm of spirituality is a simple one. He has seen God and can show Him to you. Says a great mystic of South India:

> "Only Him should we call a Guru, who is able to show God directly to our sight; Him we should hand over all wealth, mind and body, and take from Him the Ātmā for whom we aspire."

As to the arrival the same mystic Rāmadāsa says:

> "In the fulness of time he comes. Prepare yourselves............the Guru meets us out of His own accord, as when the four quarters of night have been exhausted the sun verily meets the eye."

The Upaniṣads have emphasized the need of the Teacher and asked the devotee after purifying himself to approach Him with due ceremonies. The qualifications of the teacher too have been pointed out. He is not a teacher who has only read the Vedas, but one who has as well obtained *Jñāna* (the Brahma). To use the expression of the sage Ramakrishna Paramahansa, he alone is entitled to be a teacher and to preach who holds the Divine Commission. Till then the devotee must work on. Again the devotee may transcend the teacher and the ardent one may pass through stages the teacher might have not travelled. Again individual effort is at the outset very necessary, other things will follow. For well has a mystic said:

> "The relations of the divine soul to the spirit are so pure that it is profane to seek to interpose helps ....Whenever a mind is simple, and receives a divine wisdom, then old things pass away—means teachers, texts, temples fall, it lives now and absorbs past and future into the present boon."

Intellect or Intuition.

"Thou Hasan, hast found Him by reason and through means. I, immediately, without mode or means."

—Rabia of Basra.

Charge is often times laid at the door of the Upaniṣads that they look askance at intellect. What at first appears a challenge to intellect and will, should not be taken to be the denial of it. "The Upaniṣads" says Professor Radhakrishnan, "do not maintain that intellect is a useless guide. The account of reality given by it is not false. It fails only when it attempts to grasp the reality in its fulness......Intellect need not be negated, but has only to be supple-

mented. A philosophy based on intuition is not necessarily opposed to reason and understanding......The ideal of intellect is realized in the intuitive experience, for in the Supreme are all contraries reconciled." (Indian Philosophy, Vol. II, p. 179). The Professor often emphasizes the point in his above-named treatise and repeats: "Intellect in the sense of mere understanding, working with the limited categories of time, space and cause, is inadequate. Reason also fails though it takes us beyond understanding. It does not help us to attain reality, which is not merely an idea but a spirit......It is when thought becomes perfected in intuition that we catch the vision of the soul."

The mystics of the East as those in the West have times and often emphasized the intuitive aspect. Says Ruysbroek: "By love He may be gotten and holden, by thought never." The reading of Jacob Behmen led him

to the conclusion: "Barren are the schools, barren are all forms; barren, worse than barren, those exclusive creeds: this deadly polemic LETTER, Weigel bids him withdraw into himself and await in total passivity, the incoming of the divine word, whose light reveals into the babe, what is hidden from the wise and the prudent." Behmen therefore always sought for inspiration from the book within; "the book of the glorious image of God, which it was vouchsafed to him to read, it was therein that he had studied—as a child in its mother's house, that sees what its father doth, and mimics the same in its child's play... This book had three leaves—the three principles of eternity. Therein he found all that moves, and the prophets, Christ and the apostles have taught. Therein he found the foundation of the world and all mystery—yet not he, but the spirit of the Lord doth it, in such measure as he pleaseth."

The Upaniṣads have very tersely and eloquently depicted their point of view; namely, that it is by the intuitive insight alone that He can be comprehended. Says the Kena Upaniṣad:

> "It is unknown to those who know and known to those who do not know." II. 3.

Again in the Kaṭha Up. I. 2. 23., we have the same thing repeated:

> "Not by learning is the Ātmā attained, not by genius and much knowledge of books."

In the Brah. Up. III. 5. 1, the simplicity of the child as depicted by Christ is needed:

> "Let a Brāhmaṇa renounce learning and become as a child":

Then alone can he be a fit receptacle for the divine blessings to be bestowed on him. This, however, as pointed out at the outset, must not be taken to be a desire on the part of the Upaniṣads to discount Knowledge. In the *Gītā*, the Lord Himself says:

> "while all devotees are dear to Me, one who knows Me in reality is dearest of all."

This shows that Philosophy, Science and other branches of learning are in no way opposed to mysticism. Bennett says:

> "Wisdom lies not in choosing either mysticism or philosophy but in choosing both. Philosophy is the articulation and completion of mysticism, but mysticism in turn is needed in order to complete by correction and supplementation the work of philosophy. And this is a perpetual process. For if it is the destiny of mysticism to lose its life in philosophy it is the destiny of philosophy to recover its hold upon its object by the renewal of the mystic vision. Of each we can say, He was Himself the slayer, and shall Himself be slain. The life-in-death and death-in-life of these two movements constitute the metabolism of the mind" (p. 110).

Perhaps Swami Rama Tirtha illustrated the incompetence of the mind

to comprehend the Reality, very simply when he said:

> "A pair of tongs can catch almost anything else but how can it turn back and grasp the very fingers which hold it? So the mind or intellect can in nowise be expected to know the Great Unknowable which is its very source."
>
> (In the woods of God-Realization. Vol. V. pp. 1-2)

In fact, all Science in such matters aims at analysis. We however are more concerned with the synthesis. The value of the former in this region cannot have any premium. Miss Underhill in her "Practical Mysticism" (p. 103) says:

> "You have long been like a child tearing up the petals of flowers in order to make a mosaic on the garden path and the results of this murderous diligence you mistook for a knowledge of the world. When the bits fitted with unusual exactitude, you called it Science. Now at last you have perceived the greater truth

> and loveliness of the living plant from which you broke them, have in fact entered into direct communion with it, united with its reality."

In fact, the very instruments of our comprehension are subject to the law of time and causation. It is therefore not surprising that a sixth sense becomes a necessity to comprehend the Reality. We are so much ignorant even about ourselves that it would be a mistake to account for the Unseen with the aid of Science. One can partly question the scientist, please point out where does the Speaker within me dwell, in the tongue, in the mouth, or in the heart ? The point of view has been illustrated in a short dialogue between Buddha and Sariputta, which appears in the second Volume of Indian Philosophy by Radhakrishnan (p. 461):

> "When Sariputta said to him (Buddha), 'such faith have I Lord that methinks there never was or never will be either monk or Brāhmaṇa, who is greater and wiser

> than thee.' He replied, 'Grand and bold are the words of thy mouth, behold, thou hast burst forth into ecstatic song. Come, hast thou then known all the Buddhas that were?' 'No Lord.' 'But at least thou knowest me, my conduct, my wisdom, my life, my salvation.' 'No Lord.' 'Thou sayest that thou knowest not the venerable Buddhas of the past and the future; why then are thy words so grand and bold?''

This call on the part of the great Buddha to humility on the part of the disciple, portrays also the incapability of the human body to comprehend even that which is manifest. Rama Tirtha perhaps sounded the very note which has been heard from the lips of great thinkers of all ages:

> "All attempts of philosophy or Science to pry into the ineffable have failed hopelessly. Time, space and causality contemplated either from the subjective or the objective points of view, defy all efforts to discover their nature."
>
> (Ibid. p. 8)

The conclusion of the Upaniṣads is inevitable. The Reality can be comprehended by intuition alone, not grasped by intellect. It is this spiritual intuition that is needed and this is perceptual based on experience and not a mere blind, uncritical conviction. This experience is self-certifying in its character. The belief in the incoherent description of its illumination should not be mistaken for contradiction; they may be the descriptions of only one of the many facts of the Truth. The Upaniṣads say: "Spiritual things require to be spiritually discerned......Man has the faculty of divine insight." From the very nature of the self, it is impossible to conceive or appreciate it correctly by intellect or mind. The mortal equipments cannot apprehend that which is eternal. We are unconsciously driven to seek solace in the lines from the Corinthians (I. viii. i.)

> "Knowledge puffeth, love buildeth up."

It is this synthetic eye of love that is needed to understand the Reality. Wordy jargon, philosophic discussion are idle hairsplitting catering to the palate of the mind. They tire but give no peace. To the distressed soul that seeks illumination, that divine discontent which seeks satisfaction, which makes of a Prince Śuddhodana a beggar, drives away a Tauler from the pulpit back to the cloister, intellect can give but feeble respite. In fact, the prince among the Iranian philosophers, Alghazali and the author of the Masnavi are but stray examples of that great galaxy of philosophers who gave up their envied seats of learning, donned the beggars cloak and sought within themselves the solution to the great mystery, not with the help of philosophy, but in sheer disgust after abandoning it.

Pain and Pleasure.

"If I knew for a certainty that a man was coming to my house with the conscious design of doing me good, I should run for my life as from the dry and parching wind of the African deserts called the Simoon, which fills the mouth and nose and ears and eyes with dust till you are suffocated, for fear I should get some of his good done to me—some of its virus mingled with my blood."

—Thoreau.

Thoreau meant no disrespect to the work of the social reformer when he wrote the above lines. He, however took it to be an insult to the divinity within. He who was measuring lengths

with God Himself, who with Eckhart was saying: "God needs me as much as I need Him" felt grieved to find himself the subject of the pity of an ignorant fellow-being who was playing the samaritan, consciously believing that he could change the scheme of nature.

One who sees beyond, sees everything in its right place. The illuminated ones see redemption in the approach of misery, life in the call of death. These visitations they consider as unique privileges designed to help the devotee in the march, by testing his faith in the eternal Will. A great commotion, a freak of moment, an outburst of emotion, a sudden loss, an un-expected joy all may turn into moments of inspiration and enlightenment, and of conversion. The dawn of a higher consciousness and a contact with the supreme Reality follow such moments of trial. The glimpses and flashes of divinity follow these abnormal moments and the devotee has nothing but to

bless himself. You fear trifling miseries, simple pain: behold the inquisitions where classes have courted death and drawn inspiration from the lives of the martyrs who gave up life willingly for truth. To me these inquisitions are the greatest miracles and proof of the existence of God. Cynically Bernard Shaw in his play "Androcles and the lion", thus brings out the same point:

> "Lavinica:—A man cannot die for a story and a dream.........
> Captain:..................
> Lavinica:...............I think I am going to die for God. Nothing else is real enough to die for.
> Captain: What is God ?
> Lavinica: When we know that Captain we shall be God ourselves."

Till that time we shall have to bear willingly the lashes of misery. And we should not lose heart. In everyday life even, see, man is born for struggle and does not find his self until he feels the opposition. In fact, what we call as evil in this world is

due to our distorted vision. "If we see life under the form of eternity we should realize that, as there are no weeds in nature, so there are no ultimate evils in Reality" (Bennet). Madame Guyon would extol poverty and shout at its approach a beautiful welcome: "O happy poverty, happy loss, happy nothing, which gives no less than God Himself in His intensity, no more circumscribed to the limited manner of creation..."Behmen thought: "Evil was necessary to manifest good... The bitter fountain and the sweet flow originally from one divine source. The angels and devils are both in God, of Whom and in Whom, all live and move......what were virtues without temptation? In life's warfare lies its greatness. Our full wealth of being is only realized by a struggle for very life......" Contraries are designed to reconciliation. Say the Upaniṣads: "Man is verily a sacrifice. Life is a perpetual dying till we are face to face with God." Suffering is a help to spiritual

attainment and as long as we desire spiritual life it shall not be abolished. What we call pain is merely the gap between the Dr. Jekyl and Mr. Hyde in us, the passage between the ideal in our lives and our practical life. We shall be running after a mirage if we desire to seek the home of pain and misery. Said Eckhart: "Evil is nothing but a privation of being, not an effect, but a defect." It has no reality, no positive be-ness.

It is for this reason that the devotees in their hours of trial have scoffed rather denied His Love. And these persecutions have been taken too far in individual cases as *en masse*, in one country as in another. The case of Christ, of Mansur Al Hallaj, of Joan of Arc are some of the instances. Of Guyon it is recorded that mobs were incited to do her harm and injure her followers. Scandals were spread against her. Her crime truly was "a preference for the religion of the heart to

that of the rosary"; to escape a fanatic, to avoid the hired crowd, she had to run from Paris; her escape was circulated as an elopement. Even a brother was bought to injure a sister. She was sent to the Bastille for four years. All this for His sake. They never murmured at all this. Rather loved it as a present from the Lord. They were true Christians, knew full well, their kingdom is not of this world but of the Other.

The Theory of Karma.

> "Fool ! thinkest thou that, because no Boswell is there to note thy jargon, it therefore dies and is buried ? Nothing dies, nothing can die. The idlest word thou speakest is a seed cast into time, which brings forth fruit to all eternity. Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." —CARLYLE.

Whatever interpretation you might give to it, this "huge hypothesis" if you are so pleased to call it, viz., the theory of Karma, does furnish an intelligible answer to the apparent freaks of nature. "The law of Karma requires us" says Radhakrishnan, "to reject all notions of favouritism, caprice and arbitrariness." It simply asserts the principle of Personality. You are the creator of your destiny. Man must, it says, see his beginnings in eternity, he must realize that "he is merely a

temporary link in the long chain of causes and effects, where no link is independent of the rest. The history of an individual does not begin at birth, but has been for ages in the making. It lays down in emphatic terms the Law of Evolution. We are working out our redemption at every moment. Rebirth is only a discipline by which we can perfect ourselves.

Karma is a psychological principle. While affirming that we cannot efface out from the Book of Destiny the record of past, it at the same time does not say good-bye to all individual effort. It does not affirm, what is writ is writ and does not preach the gospel of despondency. Read it carefully. It lays down: "Man is free because he is rooted in God......Freedom and Karma are two aspects of the same Reality. The divine expresses itself in law but law is not God.........Karma inspires hope for the past."

Anomalies seem to disapear. Effort and Predestination seem to be com-

plementary terms rather than contradictory ones. They are like the various facets of the same whole. Our vision is contorted because we are looking from below, from the human plane, that is from without us. Let us examine it from the divine standard within and before the divinity of the self, Karma pales into insignificance. All the same this spirit does not arrogate to itself the role of an unjust ruler who attempts to overrule Karma. The place of Karma is recognized, but side by side with the divinity of man. As back as the Buddhist times we read of beautiful discussions that go to show that it is not an external importation, but a self-imposition, working itself out in our own nature. The past has created the present. Let us make our future. This is the working of the Law of Karma.

Of course, not in so many words, the principle has all the same been recognized amongst the mystics of the various countries. Behmen used to say:

"no man holds more strongly than do I the doctrine of a future and eternal state, determined by the deeds done in this body." Science which is everyday proclaiming the indestructibility of things created, will refuse to appreciate that Nirvāṇa, which preaches complete self-effacement. The Law of Karma has for ages given solace to such a large number of seekers, tortured for no acts of theirs performed in their lifetime. It has a great hope for the future. It presents the simple outlook expressed in the words of Milinda:

> "It is through a difference in their Karma that men are not alike. But some are longlived, some are short-lived, some healthy and some sickly."

The law of Karma in the spiritual world shall continue to hold the same place that the Law of Gravitation holds in the physical world.

The Path.

> "There is but one virtue, to forget oneself as a person; one vice, to remember oneself."
>
> —*FICHTE.*

The path is difficult to tread. The "sharp edge of the razor is difficult to pass over; thus the wise say, the path to the self is hard. (Kaṭha Upaniṣad 3 valli 14)." There is no way thither by any sideroad (Mait. Br. Upan. VI prap. 30). The weak is therefore warned against treading it. Says the Upaniṣad (Mun. Upa. III. 2. 4): "Nor is the self to be gained by one destitute of strength or without earnestness or without right meditation." But the strength is not physical or mental strength as popularly understood. At least the Upaniṣads proclaim a different kind of knowledge when they lay down: "the self cannot be gained by the Vedas, nor by under-

standing, nor by much learning (*ibid.* verse 3)". He is not apprehended by eye nor by speech nor by other senses, not by penance or good works (*ibid.* III. 1. 8). Therefore they who say they know, know not; and are "like the blind led by the blind."

He can be known when He desires Himself to be known. Then He is understood without effort. Whether *Samādhi* and *Karma* are performed or not, one who has a supreme *chitta* with a heart devoid of all desires is an emancipated person (Mukti upaniṣad). Such a state when it dawns is not the result of any effort, for "those who endeavour to control the mind through force are but trying to bind a mad elephant with the filaments of a lotus stalk (*ibid*)." Through *grace* alone He is reached. "Only with whom it pleases God to be united in His spirit, and whom it pleases Him to enlighten by Himself can see God and no one else." It is only through *grace* that the solution is placed within us of the great

riddle of existence. When He forged the lock within us He did create the key to unlock it also. We, in our ignorance, however, do not see it. Jacob Behmen thus described the fall and the eventual upliftment that may follow in any person's life at any time:

> "No sooner had man fallen, than the mercy of God implanted in Him the seed of redemption. He lodged in the depths of our nature, a hidden gift of the spirit. The inner light, the "internal serpent-bruiser, the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. All our beginnings of desire towards God and heaven are the working of this indwelling seed of life. Thus salvation is wholly of *grace*. At the same time it rests with us whether we will realize or smother the nascent blessing."

Here, therefore, is the room for individual effort. "Man is the arbiter of his own destiny, and voluntarily develops from the depths of his nature, his heaven or his hell (*ibid*)." This statement, as is shown elsewhere does not militate

either with the Theory of *Karma* or of Pre-destination. And this effort in the mystic phraseology are his *practices*. The mystic furnishes a full itinerary of those regions in the unseen world which he has scanned or traversed in his moments of elevation.

The *word* says the mystic is the pathway—the only one. "That word which all the Vedas record, which all penances proclaim, which men desire when they live as religious students, that *word* I tell thee briefly is *OM*. (16) That imperishable syllable means the highest (*Brahma*). He who knows that syllable whatever he desires is his. (17). This is the best support, he who knows that support is magnified in the world of Brahmā" (Kaṭha I. 2. 15-17). There is no other way and no other password is times and often emphasized by the Upaniṣads. The Maitrī Upaniṣad emphasizes the same point:

> "...The syllable *OM* is what is called the *word*. And its end is the silent,

soundless, fearless, sorrowless, joyful, satisfied, firm, unwavering, immortal, immoveable, certain (*Brahma*) called Viṣṇu. Let him worship these two that he might obtain what is higher than everything (final deliverance) for thus it is said: He who is the high and the highest goal, by name *Omkara*, He is soundless and free from all distinctions, therefore let man dwell on Him in the crown of his head (24). And thus it has been said elsewhere: The body is the bow, the syllable *OM* the arrow, its point is the mind. Having cut through the darkness which consists of ignorance, it approaches that which is not covered by darkness. Then having cut through that which was covered (the personal soul) he saw *Brahma* flourishing like a wheel on fire burning like the sun, rigorous, beyond all darkness, that which shines forth in yonder sun, in the moon, in the fire, in the lightning. And having seen Him, he obtains immortality. And thus it has been said: Meditation is directed to the Highest Being (*Brahma*) within and before to the objects (body, *OM*, mind).

Thence the indistinct understanding becomes distinct. And when the works of the mind are dissolved, then that Bliss which requires no other witness, that is *Brahma* (Ātmā, the immortal, the brilliant) that is the way, that is the true *word*." (*Khaṇḍa* VI. 23-24.)

Once the password is revealed, it then becomes only a question of time, for the devotee to woo the Beloved. It is then a problem only to continue to walk on without feeling fatigued. There is of course a regular climb for the soul, a real chase. But the vivid descriptions of the path amply show that the stages the soul has to pass through and the centres it has to cross, the navel, the heart etc., make the journey enjoyable. The illuminations and lights which the soul witnesses and which are recognized by all the mystics, sufis and Xians, are the direct result of the Vedantist chanting with a pure heart the *word*—Om. This name is to be practised under the proper guidance of the Guru at the proper

place. When it is so recited what happens has been thus described in the Haṃsa Upaniṣad:

> "after that Unmani is the end of the *jap* (mantra). Having thus reflected on the *mānasa* by means of this *Haṃsa* one hears *Nāda* after the uttering of this *jap* a crore of times. It (*Nāda*) is (begun to be heard as) of ten kinds. The first is *chini* (like the sound of that word); the second is *chini chini*; the third is the sound of a bell; the fourth is that of a conch; the fifth is that of *tantri* (lute); the sixth is the sound of *tāla* (cymbals); the seventh is that of flute; the eight is that of *bheri* (drum); the ninth is that of *mri-danga* (double drum) and the tenth is that of clouds (thunder)..........."

These sounds relate to different centres. The deities of different centres whom the soul sees are also different. The Maitrī Upaniṣad (Khaṇḍa 6. 22 A) describes the very same stages and experiences, or the signposts, with only slight variations:

"and thus it has been said elsewhere: Two Brahmas have to be meditated upon, the word and the nonword. By the word alone is the nonword revealed. Now there is the *word—OM.* Moving upward by it (where all words and all what is meant by them ceases) he arrives at absorption in the nonword (*Brahma*). This is the way. This is the immortal. This is the union and this is the Bliss. And as the spider moving upward by the thread, gains free space, thus also he who meditates, moving upward by the *syllable—OM,* gains independence."

"Other teachers of the *word* (as *Brahma*) think otherwise. They listen to the sound of the ether within the heart, while they stop the ears with the thumbs. They compare it to seven noises, like rivers, like a bell, like a brazen vessel, like the wheels of a carriage, like the croaking of frogs, like rain, and like a man speaking in a cavern. Having passed beyond the variously apprehended sound, and having settled in the supreme, soundless (nonword), unmanifested *Brahma*, they become

undistinguished and undistinguishable, as the various flavours of the honey are lost in the taste of the honey. And thus it has been said: The *Brahma* are to be known, the word *Brahma* and the highest *Brahma*, he who is perfect in the word *Brahma* attains the highest *Brahma*. Here is the quintessence of the *word*. How subtle is the difference. The path and the goal are inseparable: One at the end of the other.''

This practice has been emphasized in the *Nādabindu Upaniṣad* which thus lays down the method:

"The yogin being in the śuddhāsana (posture) and practising the Viśva-mudrā, should always hear the internal sound through the right ear."

This practice was later adopted by the saints of the Bhakti movement.

But this necessary accompaniment should not be mistaken for the goal of the mystic. As John of the Cross said: "they are necessary because some transitory stage is unavoidable. But the higher you attain the less of such

manifestation you meet with. This portion is a grand staircase hung with pictures;—hurry up the steps..........." for higher than these visions are the glimpses of naked Truth in its virgin glory. The craving for visions if it existed in the devotee would be mere sentimentality and it is this attitude which has deserved for the mystic the condemnation that what he describes as visions are mere manifestations of an overwrought brain and fevered nerves, and should be considered as mere hallucinations not deserving of our attention. Therefore the advice of the Christian mystic is "haste through the picture-gallery, haste through the rose garden—dare the darkness wherein the glory hides."

The warning on this point comes from all quarters. Madame Guyon says: "all the stages of self-pleasing visions, of intellectual illuminations, of ecstasies and raptures, of whatever value they might have once been, are now rather obstacles than advance-

ments, and they are not of service in the state of experience, which is far above them, because the state which has props or supports, which is the case with the merely illuminated and ecstatic state rests in them in some degree and has pain to lose them. But the soul cannot arise at that state without losing all supports."

Hence the call is always, dare the darkness. Although those who have crossed the dark night of the soul know full well how chilly it is to pass through it. Guyon herself has at one place described it:

> "Alas! is it possible that this heart formerly all on fire should now become like ice."

All must pass through the dark passage. The Vedantist however, conscious of the divinity within, merrily goes on singing the Upaniṣadic hymn:

> "Lead me from the unreal to the real,
> Lead me from darkness to light,
> Lead me from death to immortality."

(*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Up.* Khaṇḍa. 1. 3)

Asceticism.

> "So inhuman is the humanity of asceticism, cruel its tender mercies, thus does it depopulate the world of its best in order to improve it."
>
> —*Vaughan.*

From ancient times queer methods have been adopted to torture the body, in order to appease the turbulent spirit within. It is presumed that the flesh is the source of all mischief. However much mischief would have been avoided had it been realized by the enthusiast that torturing the body is not the goal, but only a preparation to reach the goal. "It is the true penitence of the heart that is essential and not bodily suffering." The books have been misread where premium is given to bodily and moral purity. The ethical standards have not superiority over the

spiritual. It is not paradoxical where the Upaniṣads say, that in the development of the devotee a stage is reached when "a thief is not a thief, a murderer not a murderer. He is not followed by good, nor followed by evil, for he then overcomes all the sorrows of the heart" (Bṛh. IV). It should not however lead one to discount the purity of the body. For discipline is absolutely necessary and in fact requisite in the case of those who do not want to pass through all the Āśramas, *i. e.*, the ascetics who have all connections with God, Whom they desire to woo. For them such strict discipline is laid down that there seems nothing inhuman in these tortures. And this staunch discipline has been insisted upon even to this day by great religious leaders like Swami Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Vivekananda and Rama Tirtha to name a few.

But this asceticism should not become a positive torture to the body so as to have the mind always distracted by the pain experienced by the body. The

body has a great mission to perform, it is like the horse, a means, to the rider, the spirit, to reach the goal. Therefore protest has always been launched by the mystics against such practices. Here is one among them from South India expressing his feelings in the following words:

> "Some people tear their body uselessly for the sake of spiritual realization. They wear brown clothes, but a dog is also brown. They bear matted hair but a bear has also matted hair. They live in caves but even rats live in caves. These people torment their body for nothing. The body is both good and bad. We should rise superior to the body, and think of God. If we look at it from one point of view, the body is a store-house of miseries, a mine of diseases, the birthplace of foulness, the unholy of unholies. From another point of view the body is good and beautiful, the source of happiness and a means of spiritual realization. Yet again, the body is merely a curdled product of menstrual blood, a net of desire and infatuation, and a prey to death.

In another way it is a pure thing, the treasure of treasures, the temple of God, the means for getting rid of worldly existence. We should give neither happiness nor unhappiness to the body. The body is neither good nor bad. We should rise superior to it and think of God."

"True repentance is of the heart, bodily suffering is not an essential" says Ruysbroek. A hymn of the 15th century in Latin, the translation of which appears in the book on the mystics by Vaughan, characterizes this point of view and truly represents the Christian outlook:

"Why smite thy breast and lament ? Why not live the soul ? Why meditate for ever on the sign ? He thou lovest is within Thee. Thou seekest Jesus—thou hast Him. He is found and thou perceivest Him not. Why these groans, this weeping ? The true joy is thine; hidden within thee, though thou knowest it not, lies in the solace of thy anguish. Thou hast within, thou seekest without, the cure for the languishing soul."

The voice of protest has always been laid from the time of the Upaniṣads to the time of the Bhakti movement, very vehemently. It is the Faith that is the purifier and the chastener. And this Faith "believes, and does not discuss" (Bernard).

He is benevolent. We are in fact doubting His insight if we hide the heart and try to please Him by these external manifestations of purity. Such asceticism may not be possible for many, and yet they should not lose faith in Him. To conquer the flesh may be essential and required at a stage of the spiritual discipline, but what is wanted is a righteousness of the heart. He does not want form from us, but the spirit. We should not lose our view of the promise given by Him, but keep His words in view:

> "Merge thy mind in Me, be My devotee, prostrate thyself before Me, thou shalt come even unto Me. I pledge thee My troth, thou art dear to Me. Abandoning all the Dharmas,

> come unto Me alone for shelter, sorrow not, I will liberate thee from all sins.'' (*Gitā.*)

"Despair not" say the Upniṣads. Such is the promise—all so fair. Refuse to remain entombed in the body any more. Hear its call. It seeks to free itself. The infinite spirit is working within us. We have to grow conscious of it. The light is within us there, alas! the lamp is covered. Remember, the real is the basis of the Unreal. Believe it that you are the Creator, and can even annihilate time, not by penances of the flesh, but by love. Augustine very aptly put the view when he said "Love and do everything". The greatest penance is love and not the asceticism of the body. What the ascetic has to do is to love Him, wholly and exclusively. This torch of love alone can guide you. This is the flag of the devotee—his humility. He is so great that to say anything about Him would be well-nigh an untruth. Goethe in his Faust speaks of His undemonstrability and

His greatness. His language is awe-inspiring:

"Who dares to name Him,
Who to say of Him, I believe ?
Who is there with a heart to dare,
To utter I believe Him not."

The ascetic is no better placed than the heretic, although I still would like to see one heretic in this world honest to his profession. The greatest penance one could do was to Love. This demands "Sell all thou hast and follow Me." Take up the challenge, O, ascetic! and clean thy heart of all its possessions. These worldly possessions have an ephemeral existence, even the body is left at Death. You seek life eternal, then why this torture of the body, more than is necessary. Asceticism of the soul is all that is required to gain the spiritual end.

Solitude.

"Secrets are told in silence, whispered in solitude ! The artist, the lover, the poet in the time of inspiration is notoriously unsocial. In the wilderness speaks the loved to the lover, as it were a bashful lover, that his sweetheart before men entreats not, nor friendly, but commonly and as a stranger he kisses."

Underhill—*The Mystic Way*.

The Upaniṣads call the ascetic to search out a quite clean place to carry on his devotions. It has in fact laid down the details to help him in finding a place that will contribute to his spiritual elevation.

Yet the Upaniṣads do not say that search cannot be carried in the midst of the world. In fact the books have later on held out King Janaka as a person living in the world and yet a great yogī fit to give the crowning instructions in mysticism to the sage Śuka. Underhill has rightly pointed out "the true mystic quest may as well be fulfilled in the market as in the cloister, by Joan of Arc on the battlefield as by Simon Stylites on his pillar." As Dr. Tauler has said:

> "Many are cloistered in the body while thought and desires wander to and fro over the earth. But many others do, even amid the noise and stir of the marketplace and the shop keep such watch over their hearts and set such ward on their senses, that they go unharmed, and their inner peace abides unbroken. Such men are more truly to be called monks than those who within a convent wall have thought and senses distraught that they can scarce say a single paternoster with true devotion."

Even in everyday life solitude is necessary to confer great messages, how much more is it necessary to carry on the divine tete-a-tete. "Lovers" says Underhill, "put out the candle and draw the curtains when they wish to see God and Goddess, and in the higher communion, the night of thought is the light of perfection."

Duty and Discipline.

"Mystic contemplation without practical goodness is not perfection."

Radhakrishnan on Buddhism.

The Upaniṣads ordain the ascetic, the yogī, to live one of the severest lives of asceticism. In fact he is not permitted to look at the picture of women, much less have any intercourse of any kind with them. Woman is here thought to be one who is likely to tempt the most. She is considered the inheritor of the great sin of Eve. It is difficult to justify it or condemn it. At any rate there it is. The later interpreters of the Upaniṣads, and Chaitanya and Ramakrishna in much later periods have taken to task their devotees who were found in the company

of equally pure women devotees, discussing religious topics. Kabir has even gone further and even prohibited any sort of conversation for a yogī with even one's own mother all alone. This was all a flaming ideal of righteousness and discipline that has been preached by the Upaniṣads and by the later Hindu religious leaders. Externals of course count very little, when the battle is with the inner self, for the Upaniṣads repeatedly say "He is the greatest conqueror who conquers himslf." But while this is the discipline laid down for the ascetic, the creation of the institution of the four Āśramas, where after performing his other duties the man can retire to forests to contemplate is direct proof of the possibility, nay the recognition by the Upaniṣads of following one's own duties and performing his obligations. Neither the Upaniṣads nor the *Gītā* contemplate giving up of work as an ideal. Service of humanity they hold is the worship of God. "Sannyāsa is renouncing all interested work. Tyāga is giving up

the fruit of all work". Mahādeva the ideal ascetic,

> "Seated in the Himalayan snows readily drinks poison for the saving of humanity. The anchorite should carry peace in his heart's apartment in the retreats of misery and pain, in tumult and traffic." (Radhakrishnan: *Indian Philosoply*, II., p. 580).

And at another place the same author interprets the Upanishadic ideal as follows:

> "What makes the ascetic great is his holiness and humility. It is not the capacity to do conjurer's tricks or dream hysteric dreams, but it is to remain pure from lust and resentment, passion and desire. The living martyrdom is ever so much more difficult than killing one's self. Death is easy, it is life that is taxing. A true ascetic is not one who gives up home and society to escape the social bonds. He is not one who becomes a Sannyāsī, because he suffers shipwreck in life." (*Ibid.* vol. II, p. 221).

The cause of our bondage, is the "mine" and "thine." It is a fetter forged

by the Mind. It shall be broken, by "I am He" (the Vedantist's *Tat Twam Asi*—Thou art That—also connotes the same thing). Our miseries have been described in The Maitrī Upaniṣad, Khaṇḍa 6, 30 as follows:

> "Carried along the waves of qualities, darkened in his imaginations, unstable, fickle, crippled, full of desires, vacillating he enters into a belief, believing I am he, this is mine, and he binds himself by his self, as a bird with a net."

Discipline then consists in the control of mind. For "what a man thinks" say the Upaniṣads "that he is." "Mind alone is the cause of bondage, and liberty for men ; if attached to the world it becomes bound, if free from the world it is liberty."

Duty one has to perform. "Men cannot be found for heaven except through the world." But DISCRIMINATION is the watchword in the performance of duty. And this discri-

mination inculcates a discipline that will ask tolerate all, and keep a catholic view of things, for as Behmen would say:

> "Why should I condemn man......Doth one herb, one flower say to another, thou art sour and dark. I cannot stand in thy neighbourhood? Have they not all one common Mother, whence they grow? Even so do all souls. All men proceed from one, why boast we of ourselves as the children of God, if we are no wiser than the flowers and herbs of the field......Doth not a bee gather honey out of many flowers; and though some flowers be far better than others what cares the bee for that? She takes what serves her purpose. Should she leave her sting in the flower, if its juices are not to her taste, as a man doth in his disdainfulness. Men strive about the husk, but the noble life juice they forsake."

This is the discipline that is necessary. With Suso, in the performance of duty let a man see his redemption: "take a gladsome look into thine

inmost, and see how God in thy loving soul playeth His play of love."

There is no conflict in the performance of the duty and in the strict unworldliness that is advocated by the Upaniṣads. They want a man to lead the life of the lotus, living in the mist of all dirt, untouched by the water that strives to cling to it unsuccessfully. Act, and of the fruit thereof let Him take care.

Mystic Phraseology.

"Mysticism has always been accustomed to express the transports of divine passion by metaphors borrowed from the amorous phraseology of earth. It had done this with every variety of taste from the grossness of some of the most eminent Romanist Saints to the beautiful Platonism of Spenser's hymns of 'heavenly love' and 'heavenly beautie'. But nowhere has metaphor branched so luxuriantly into allegory as in the East with such subtility and freedom as among the Persian mystic. ....Sir William Jones furnishes some specimens of a sort of mystical glossary by aid whereof their drinking songs may be read as psalms, and their amatory effusions transformed into hymns full of edification for the faithful.........Yet never was religious language more florid and

more sensuous. According to the system alluded to wine is equivalent to devotion, the tavern is an oratory, kisses and embraces the raptures of piety, while wantonness, drunkenness and merriment are religious ardour and abstraction from all terrorist thoughts.''

(Hours with the Mystics vol. II. p. 24)

What is true of the mystic poetry in the Persian language and the life of the mystic there is true of the phraseology employed by the followers of the Bhakti School. One has to take up the works of Mira Bai and others to read these rapturous flights. Sur Das is another example who has depicted in similar language many of the incidents of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's life. Offence in fact has been taken to the very life's episodes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He has been criticised at places to have led a merry life. However, recent researches have given a lie to the immoral interpretations put on the acts from the drama of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's life. The alleged drama took place when Śrī Kṛṣṇa was

only 7 years of age. In the amours of the Gopīs of Brindaban, Swami Vivekananda sees the answer to the great problem that has battled many of the world's greatest thinkers; viz.:—

> "If there is a personal God, all-merciful, all-powerful, why is the hell of an earth here, why did he create this ?—He must be a partial God."

Vivekananda states: "The only solution that can be found is what you read about the love of the Gopīs. They hated every adjective that was applied to Kṛṣṇa; they did not care to know that He was Lord of creation; they did not care to know that He was Almighty; they did not care to know that He was omnipotent and so forth. The only thing they understood was that He was infinite love, that was all. The Gopīs understood Kṛṣṇa only as the Kṛṣṇa of Brindaban. He, the leader of the hosts, the King of kings, to them was the shepherd, and the shepherd for ever.........The historian who

records this marvellous love of the Gopīs is one who was pure, the eternally pure Śuka, the son of Vyāsa.........
People with ideas of sex and money and of fame, bubbling up every minute in the heart, daring to criticise and understand the love of the Gopīs!.........
Everything is here thrown away. What remains is the madness of love.........."
(Vol. iv. 3 p. 257, 258 and 259.) As Spinoza would point out "Whoso loves God must not expect God to love Him in return."

This analogy of the soul to the bride and of God to the bridegroom and similar amorous phraseology, is a later importation. In the Upaniṣads we do not find such vivid portrayal in erotic language. Of course there is nothing objectionable in it, and in fact this has contributed a large way in producing some of the best literature of the world, unique from the point of view of the artist. Ranade in his Indian Mysticism thus speaks of this aspect: (p. 23)

"We do not suppose that the sexual relationship between the soul and God has been more abundantly or more passionately brought out any where else in the literature of the world. The question arises how is it that the mystics have come to regard the relationship between God and self as on a par between the bride and the bridegroom. Is it not a morbid psychological condition where the mystic portrays the otherwise inexpressible love of the sex ? Is it due to what Freud and Jang call the LIBIDO which is at the root of every conative and creative activity ? Is Schroeder right in supposing that the differtential essence of religion is reducible only to a sex ecstasy ? We think that none of these explanations would meet the mystics, sexual portrayal of his religious realization. We have to understand it in a mere sense of analogy.........." As James would say 'Religious consciousness and sexual consciousness are as poles apart !"

Miss Underhill seems to steer clear of the interpretations on the Kṛṣṇa cult, and leaning to the aforesaid views says:

"The fact that the movement (Bhakti) on its lower and popular side, gave support to the most erotic and least desirable aspects of the Kṛṣṇa cult ought not to prejudice our judgment of its higher and purer aspect. The wholesale condemnation of a faith on account of its worst by products is a dangerous principle for Christian critics."

Objection may be taken to that part where it seems to presume that there is a grosser aspect recognised. In fact, in that case it would be reading a formal meaning at places where the esoteric interpretation is necessary.

There is nothing grotesque about the language of the mystic. He attempts to convey the meaning by citations which in their fervour and heat of passion convey very nearly the idea which he desires to be conveyed. The madness of sexual passions therefore is generally resorted to in expressing the madness of the devotee for the God.

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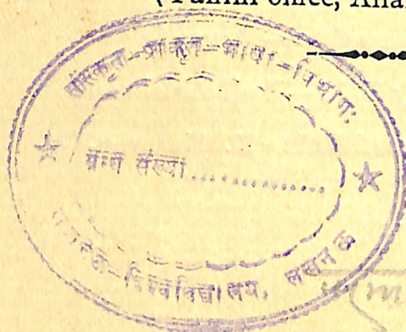
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